

NOTE ON *CYPRÆA CAPUT-ANGUIS*, PHILIPPI,
WITH THE
DESCRIPTION OF A NEW VARIETY OF *C. CAPUT-SERPENTIS*.

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IN 1849 Philippi¹ described this shell as follows:—

“C. testa oblongo-ovata, valde convexa, lateribus incrassatis angulatis; basi convexa, nigro-fusca, in dorso alboguttata, extremitatibus albidis; interstitiis dentium lacteorum aperturæ fuscis. Long. $11\frac{1}{2}$ lin., lat. $7\frac{1}{2}$ lin. Patria

“Coloribus omnino cum *C. capite-serpentis* convenit, sed maculæ albæ ad extremitates vix conspicuæ, dentes aperturæ in utroque labio, sedecim, lactei, sulcis fuscis divisi, producti, incisura ad basin aperturæ, lata in sinistrum flexa, quibus notis forma oblonga, lateribus longe minus dilatata accedit.”

No reference to the species is made in the monograph in Sowerby's “Thesaurus” or Reeve's “Conchologica Iconica,” save the casual mention in the index to the former of “caput anguis, Phil., not identified.”

Mr. Melvill, in his “Survey of the genus *Cypræa*,”² after extracting the above description, remarks: “This species is said by Mr. Garrett, Mr. Brazier, and Mr. Angas (all of whom have collected it plentifully, the first in the Sandwich Islands, the others in Australia) to be quite distinct, and to differ mainly from *C. caput-serpentis* in the smaller size, less dilation of the sides, and more obscure markings. I apprehend all these specimens will be but varieties of the commoner form, distinguished by their greater convexity, and, if this surmise be correct, the true *C. caput-anguis* of Philippi is a lost species”

Mr. Raymond Roberts, in his monograph of the genus *Cypræa*, places the form in his list of unidentified species, and remarks:³ “*C. caput-anguis*, Philippi. An unfigured species without known locality, less than one-half inch in length, brown between the teeth, and white-spotted at the extremities. Said to present a dorsal surface similar to *C. caput-serpentis*, Linn., which has led authors to incorrectly place it in the synonymy of that species.” Further, when describing *C. caput-serpentis*, he says:⁴ “A more elongated variety of a uniformly darker color, and with margins less angular, has been wrongly identified by authors as the *C. caput-anguis*, Phil. Compared with *caput-serpentis*, Pease says it is smaller in size, and the spots are

¹ Zeitsch. für Malakozool., Jahrg. vi (1849), p. 24.

² Mem. Manchester Lit. and Phil. Soc., ser. iv, vol. i.

³ Tryon's Manual of Conch., ser. i, vol. vii, p. 206.

⁴ T.c., p. 173.

smaller, but specimens labeled *caput-anguis*, and sent to the Philada. Acad. Nat. Sciences by Mr. Brazier, who collected them at Ballenger River, N.S.W., are fully as large as the typical form."

Recently, I have come into possession of two adult specimens, which appear to me to belong to the true *C. caput-anguis*, and to prove its specific distinction. My specimens are slightly smaller than the type-specimen described by Philippi, but appear otherwise to exactly agree with the description: they are much more convex, oblong, and piriform in shape than *C. caput-serpentis*; the dorsal surface is not so depressed, nor the sides angulated. The smaller specimen has not quite completed the brownish tinting of the base, though otherwise adult, and the dorsal surface is very similar to that of *C. caput-serpentis*; it measures 16 by 9.5 mm. In the larger specimen the brownish tinting between the teeth and on the base is perfect. A young specimen measures 15 by 9 mm.

The specimens said to be wrongly referred to *C. caput-anguis* appear to belong to another form, quite separable from the typical form either

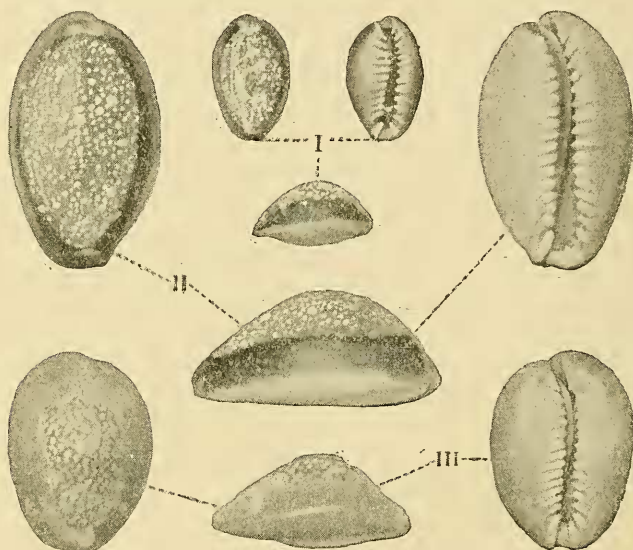


FIG. I. *Cypraea caput-anguis*, Phil.

„ II. *C. caput-serpentis*, Linn., variety usually mistaken for the preceding.

„ III. *C. caput-serpentis*, var. *caput-columbri*, n.

of this species or *C. caput-serpentis*. They are more oblong in form than the latter, sides not thickened or angulated, nor is the dorsal surface flattened or depressed, and the base is invariably white or cream-coloured, being very noticeable both in young and adult specimens. I have specimens from Western Australia and New South Wales.

A very fine colour variety of *C. caput-serpentis*, from the Hawaiian Islands, has been in my collection for some years, and I have recently seen a very fine live specimen from Lord Howe Island. Coming from such widely separated localities, they may, I think, be characterized as a variety under the name of

CYPRÆA CAPUT-SERPENTIS, VAR. CAPUT-COLUBRI, n.

Shell warm fawn or light cream colour, the spots on the dorsal surface having the appearance of snow-white specks of irregular size; extremities tipped with white; the base white; the rich fawn-colour of the margins extending about half-way across the convex base; teeth conspicuous, white; interior white, in contradistinction to the violet hue of the interior of *C. caput-serpentis*. Long. 27, lat. 20 mm.

Hab.—Hawaiian Islands and Lord Howe Island.